

**IN THE CLAIMS**

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Please cancel claims 1-6 and 14 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please amend claims 7 and 10-13, and add new dependent claims 15-18 as follows.

Claims 1-6 (cancelled)

7. (Currently Amended) A starter comprising:

a starting motor for generating rotation force;

a pinion shaft rotatable by the starting motor and supported slidably in an axial direction, the pinion shaft having a recess on an outer periphery of a front end portion thereof and a step on the outer periphery thereof;

a pinion fitted on the pinion shaft in a rotation-restricted manner relative to the pinion shaft and movable forward integrally with the pinion shaft, wherein the pinion has a front end surface and a rear end surface, wherein the front end surface is further from the motor than the rear end surface and the rear end surface adjacently faces the step in the axial direction;

a restricting member fitted in the recess in front of the pinion in an axial direction to receive the front end surface of the pinion; and

a pressing member disposed between the pinion and the step of the pinion shaft ~~on a side of the rear end surface of the pinion~~ for pressing the pinion toward the restricting member relative to the pinion shaft.

8. (Original) The starter as in claim 7, further comprising:

a cover for restricting the restricting member from disengaging radially outward from the pinion shaft when the pinion shaft is rotated by the starting motor.

9. (Original) The starter as in claim 8, wherein:

the cover is provided at a front end portion of the pinion shaft and fixed to the pinion to surround an outer periphery of the restricting member.

10. (Currently Amended) A pinion configuration for a starter comprising:

a rotatable pinion shaft slidably supported in an axial direction and having a first end and a second end, the second end having a step on an outer periphery thereof; the step having a wall rising from the outer periphery of the pinion shaft in a radial direction;

a pinion fitted on the second end of the pinion shaft in front of the step in the axial direction, wherein the pinion has a front end surface and a rear end surface, the rear end surface being opposite to the front end surface and adjacently facing the rising wall of the step in the axial direction; and

a pressing member disposed between a rear end portion of the pinion and the rising wall of the step ~~the pinion shaft near the rear end surface of the pinion~~, wherein the pressing member normally presses the pinion in a direction away from the first end of the pinion shaft, and wherein the rear end surface of the pinion is brought into contact with the rising wall of the step when the pinion meshes with a ring gear for starting an engine.

11. (Currently Amended) The ~~starter~~ pinion configuration according to claim 10, further comprising a restricting member fitted on the second end of the pinion shaft in front of the pinion, wherein the front end surface of the pinion is in press-contact with the restricting member by the pressing member.

12. (Currently Amended) The ~~starter~~ pinion configuration according to claim 10, wherein the pressing member includes a spring, and a first end of the spring is connected to the rear end portion of the pinion and a second end of the spring is connected to the rising wall of the step.

13. (Currently Amended) The ~~starter~~ pinion configuration according to claim ~~10~~ 11, further comprising a starting motor for generating a rotation force for rotating the pinion shaft, wherein the restricting member presses the pinion toward the motor.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (New) The stator according to claim 7, wherein an outer peripheral portion of the rear end surface of the pinion protrudes toward the step in the axial direction for defining a chamber in an inner periphery of the pinion, and the pressing member is housed in the chamber.

16. (New) The stator according to claim 15, wherein the pressing member includes a spring, wherein a front end of the spring is in contact with an inner peripheral portion of the rear

end surface of the pinion, which defines a front end of the chamber, and a rear end of the spring is in contact with the step.

17. (New) The stator according to claim 7, wherein the pinion is connected with the pinion shaft through splines.

18. (New) The stator according to claim 15, wherein the rear end surface of the pinion and a rear end of the pressing member are brought into contact with the step when the pinion meshes with a ring gear.